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## **Question Time: Should there a right to be forgotten?**

**By Rob Burgess Tribune night editor | Posted: Friday, May 8, 2015 8:06 pm**

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

Both the European Union and Argentina have instituted a so-called "Right to be forgotten" policy. This allows people to ask search engines like Google to remove search results which link to embarrassing, true information such as news stories about past crimes.

So, we wanted to know: "Do you think this policy is a good idea? Why or why not?"

### **Your answers**

"Yes. They should not be keeping information on us anyway." — **Sandy Flack Aerne Spencer**

"I think it is a good idea, especially if the case is old and/or the crime was nonviolent. The idea of the justice system is that once you serve your time you have repaid society. But when that follows you for the rest of your life it

is hard to make a fresh start and might cause people to be more likely to re-offend because they have few options open to them.” — **Aileen Robinson**

“I use Ask Jeeves and Friendster, so mostly I am forgotten.” — **Alan Birkemeier**

### **Our answers**

“Bad idea. Information about someone’s past crimes could prove to be important for potential employers and neighbors, among others. Forcing search engines to remove information found in the public record or from a legitimate news outlet goes against the First Amendment. (If it’s information illegally obtained and/or untrue, however, that’s a different matter.)” — **Dax Lowery**

“In a way I support these types of laws. I compare it to many states’ expungement procedures. A misdemeanor arrest that occurred in one’s 20s for a non-violent crime really should not continue to haunt someone the rest of their life. We’ve never had this vast of a permanent record before. For some people there aren’t very many results — bringing these potentially embarrassing or troublesome items to the top of Google searches. The laws don’t say the owner of the website has to take the information down, just that when you search for a specific thing, such as someone’s name, that item no longer comes up. I do think it should be done on a case-by-case basis. If you are arrested for vandalizing your ex’s car in a fit of rage, but

never convicted, I think after some time has passed you should be able to move on with your life. If, on the other hand, you went to prison for some heinous crime and have been out on parole for the past five years, I think it should stay. Think about it, before we date in the modern age, we Google. Before an employer calls an applicant for an interview, they Google. Heck, we even have to Google ourselves from time to time to find out what we've been up to. Being able to control some of those results could mean the difference between personal success and continued failure." — **Jill Bond**

"I'm torn on this one. I'm sympathetic to those who have committed some minor crime years ago that haunts them to this day. This includes charges which are eventually dropped. These dismissals don't get reported as loudly, if at all, compared to the original 'crime.' On the other hand, I can see the rich abusing this for their own benefit, whereas the poor can't, or don't know how to, fight this sort of fight. What's amusing is that people who have tried to employ this policy have to notify the originators of the links they are seeking to remove from the search results. This only serves to alert these organizations, who may be inclined resurrect the original story when they haven't even thought of it in years." — **Rob Burgess**

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